

Logging companies concerned about timber

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — It's only 108 miles from Pope & Talbot's large lumber mill here to Broadus, Mont.

And manager Jim Rarick said his mill, which has cut most of its timber from the Black Hills, is hauling logs as far as 170 miles from the ponderosa pine forests of southeastern Montana.

Despite higher timber sales on the Black Hills National Forest, Rarick said his 100 million-board-foot mill has been forced to look to outlying areas like southeastern Montana for sawlogs.

"Otherwise we'd go out of business," he said.

"There's a big demand for timber in the Black Hills, and it has spread into Montana," Rarick said during a telephone interview.

"We've given some landowners up-front money, say half of the sale, to meet some of their immediate (financial) needs," Rarick said.

Pope & Talbot has a Timberland Assistance Plan, Rarick said. "We're not interested in just cutting down trees. Many ranchers in southeastern Montana have timberlands that have never been cut or man-

aged, but timber should be managed just like a crop."

A color brochure for Pope & Talbot's TAP program lists "positive benefits" from timber management, including improving the vigor and growth of the trees that are left, dramatically increasing forage, increasing the amount of water for other uses and an immediate source of cash income.

Pope & Talbot will selectively cut in southeastern Montana, Rarick said. "We don't clear out the entire timber stand, but thin trees whose growth has peaked. We will leave seed trees."

Rarick said, "The lumber market has been excellent in the last year," but cautioned, "right now the market is at the top of a cycle. The only way to go is down."

Rarick said that "Pope & Talbot hopes to supplement its

timber supply in southeastern Montana only as long as it is economically feasible. Our future in southeastern Montana depends heavily on the allowable cut on the Black Hills National Forest and the economics of transporting logs, and future stumpage rates in Montana."

Corbin Newman, a Black Hills National Forest timber manager, agrees with mill operators that his forest "isn't meeting the demand from the industry. The amount under contract is being depleted by cutting because of 18 months of accelerated demand."

Newman said demand exceeds what the forest is offering, despite higher sales. "In

fiscal year 1987, for instance, we offered 128 mbf for sale and 154 mbf was cut in our forest," Newman said.

In Wyoming's Big Horn National Forest, another big source of timber for the region, sales have declined about 10 percent during the past three years.

Frank Gladics of the Rapid

City, S.D., based Intermountain Forest Industry Association, said "Demand for timber in the United States is as high as it has ever been."

Many mills plan to log private stands in southeastern Montana because the Custer

National Forest plans to offer only about 3 mbf a year, Gladics said.

"We feel the Custer Forest has a potential of 13 mbf. I feel the Custer Forest plan is too heavily geared to recreation."

